# Movie Makers

Creating Graphics

Watch the latest theatrical release and you may be dazzled by the beginning titles alone. Film producers often hire companies to produce these titles. However, we are not as fortunate to be able to hire someone else to produce our titles and credits. Yet a film or a video isn't really complete without titles. graphics give the program an individual identity. Also, we want to see the person's name who produced the piece we've just enjoyed.

So creating quality graphics on a low budget or no budget or without a computer can be a challenge. Lets consider some non-computer as well as some computer based alternatives.

First, some basics for creating graphics whether or not they are made with a computer.

ASPECT RATIO
The current screen size is 4 x 3. Four equally sized units across the top of the screen and 3 equally sized units down the side. 16 mm is similarly sized.
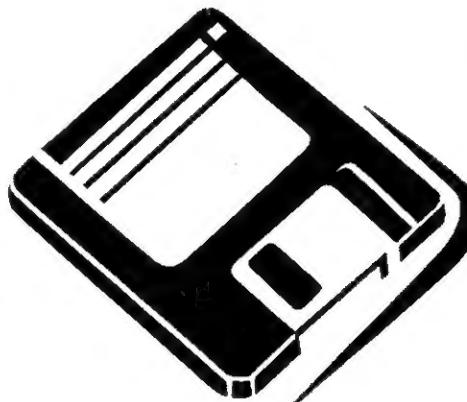
Graphics give the program an individual identity.
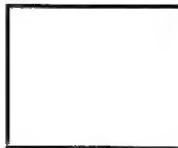
When high definition television (HDTV) finally takes hold, expect this screen size ratio to change to 16x9.

ESSENTIAL AREA
In television, up to 15% of the outer edge of the picture can be lost

Machines Don't Make Films

It hits you in the face when you open any photo magazine!.....
NEW!!........IMPROVED!!!....STATE OF THE ART!!....THE SYSTEM BUILT FOR FILMMAKERS WITH ASPIRATIONS BIGGER THAN THEIR BUDGETS!

These and a thousand other "buzz words" and "catch Phrases" are dreamed up by the fertile minds of the Madison Avenue "sharpies" for the sole purpose of making you dissatisfied with your present equipment to the point of causing you to dump your current movie tools. (In many instances, before you have used it enough to really learn how it operates.)

In considering this, I am struck by a disturbing observation. In my years of observing the amateur movie scene, two things stand out. One is the tremendous increase of the quality and sophistication of the equipment available to the amateur, and second, other than for a few notable exceptions, no significant corresponding improvement in the collective quality of the films being produced. In other words, an increased

From the Editor

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Officers of the Society: President, Mike Trippiedi, Champaign, Illinois;Vice-President, Ernest Smith, Salt Lake, Utah; Secretary/Treasurer, Roger Garretson, Oak Park, California; Directors, Peter Crombie, Oak Lawn, Illinois, Jack Ruddell, Mississauga, Ontario.

SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES

CANADA, Margaret Chamberlain, 2701 Arbutus Rd, Victoria, BC V8N1W8.

NEW ZEALAND, George Shannon, 107 Ballance Street, Gisbourne 3801

I just installed a mini-dish and I am receiving a month's free service. There are all sorts of channels but still not a lot to watch. In this particular package, there are two independent film channels. I've watched a little of each and have noticed the mostly polished "big screen" look these productions have. After looking at these channels, I thought, why not a channel for productions produced for a little or no money? I understand that television exists because it is a business. But there are a lot of small budget productions out there deserve an audience. Sure there is public access, but many access channels have rules such as you have to live in the community in order to show work on the channel. And that is a legitimate rule. But why not a cable channel for our kind of work? After all there is the cooking channel, NASA TV, cartoon channels, three Disney channels, Romance Channel, Western Channel and so on. Why can't we have a channel to show case our award winners? Would there be enough interest in watching such a channel? Would there be enough work to program such a channel? How could the channel pay for itself?

Perhaps the place to start is with a winner's reel. Maybe AMPS could put together a reel of winners to send to interested members. I know I am interested in seeing other member's work.

Finally, I had this plea in the last issue and am offering it again. If your membership is due, please renew it. AMPS can only grow with your participation. Sure, it may only be a newsletter arriving in your mail box once every other month but that's because we need your input.

Matt Jenkins

amount of vastly improved movie making equipment has not significantly increased the quality and quantity of amateur films being produced. is it possible that the picture taking machine is becoming more of a status symbol than a tool?

Speaking only in terms of film making, a camera or a camcorder is nothing more than a box with a window that opens to permit slices of life to be imprinted on a strip of film or tape as it moves past that window. The machine is a tool to produce moving pictures...no more, and no less.

A film is really no more than an idea expressed visually in such a manner, that the viewer following the story can visualize the idea the film maker is intending to put across. A good idea can be skillfully and entertainingly conveyed with a $25.00 clunker picked up in a pawn shop, and by the same token, we can be bored silly with some technically perfect trivia filmed with a $2,000 camera or camcorder.

Let's face it! Machines do not make films.I repeat! A camera or camcorder is merely a tool, like a hammer, saw, typewriter, or a paint brush. The film maker must learn to become technically proficient, but that is only half the battle. He may know how to get the correct exposure and sharp pictures, and make titles flip-flop, but unless he also becomes creatively proficient in the manner his films tell a story or convey an idea, his efforts just aren't going to "make the cut."

If the movie maker comes up short in the idea department, a newer and more expensive piece of equipment is not the answer. Without ideas a camera is just another dumb (and expensive) chunk of metal or plastic sitting on the mantle, staring out with that big glassy uncomprehending eye.

STAN WHITSITT

("Graphics" continued from page 1)
between the first recording of an image and its final viewing.

15%
is
lost
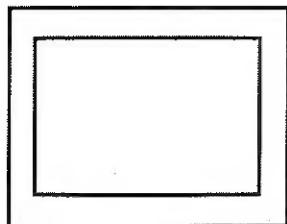
So graphics need to be created so they won't get chopped off at the screen's edges.

FONT SIZE
Larger, thicker, simply designed letters are easier to read. Use both upper and lower case letters. Remember the NTSC standard provides a low resolution image. NTSC stands for National Television Standards Committee which developed the standard for American television. This standard is 525 lines per frame and 30 frames per second. This standard is used in Northand Central America and a few other parts of the world.

COLOR
Avoid using bright colors. Again the NTSC standard will not allow for it. This is especially important to remember if creating graphics using a computer and transferring them to video. Also, if using red, use a low intensity red.

GRAPHIC PLACEMENT
The screen can be divided into thirds in order to place graphics.

Place graphics here

here,

and here.
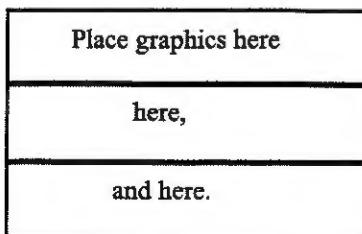
TYPE FACE
Pick one letter style and keep it throughout the piece. Never use more than two styles of lettering in a graphic.

NON-COMPUTER ALTERNATIVES
Are there really any non-computer alternatives out there? It depends on your project. Robert Rodriquez used pen and ink drawings and lettering for his short "Bed Head" and they really worked well.

HAND LETTERING
If you can draw, or if you can't but know someone who does and it fits in with the purpose of your project, then go for it! But remember aspect ratio and essential area. Be sure to communicate these ideas to the artist as the person may not know television production limitations.

RUB-ON LETTERS
Rub-on letters or the peel off and stick letters are a marvelous way to create graphics. These letters are bought in sheets and then can be placed on paper or plexi-glass. or glass to shoot through. When using this method, keep in mind that the letters need to remain on a straight line and to be careful about spacing between the letters. Both are harder to do than it sounds!

Mount the graphic on a flat black (nonreflective) matte board which has been cut to leave an inch or two border on all four sides. Then your graphic remains flat and is easier to shoot , either taped to the wall or on an easel.

COMPUTER BASED ALTERNATIVES

BUDGET ALTERNATIVE
Does anybody have a Commodore 64 with a disk drive sitting in a closet. Often these machines can be had at yard sales for very little. You can purchase a title program which will display, crawl or scroll titles in a small selection of fonts and colors. Actually the titles look pretty good. The name of the program is "Pro-Titler" and it is put out by the LoadStar Company in issue #61. You need the disk drive to run the program and creating the graphics is a little labor intensive. For a small amount of money, can be creating graphics for your videos! Be sure to print out the instructions. And the nice thing about the Commodore 64, it can easily hook up to your existing TV and VCR!

VIDEO TOASTER
Keeping on the line of Commodore based products, I loved the Video Toaster. The Toaster is still being produced, but I am unclear on the platform it uses. The Toaster 2000 and 4000 were terrific machines and probably could do almost anything necessary for small or no budget productions.

OTHER LOW COST COMPUTER ALTERNATIVES
You can use your word processing program and create graphics, print them out on colored paper if desired and shoot them with your camera. If you have an in-camera fade button use it to fade between the graphics.

HIGHER COST COMPUTER ALTERNATIVES

POWER POINT
Wow, what a program. This program creates graphics that can move, dissolve and perform a variety of transitions. I have seen this program used to run billboard channels. The learning curve is small if you are already computer literate. And of course you need the video card and so on.

Also, there is Adobe Premiere, and all sorts of programs out there for use with Mac and PC platforms. Send me your computer graphic suggestions at mattj@cameron.edu . I will include them in an upcoming issue.

(*Graphics* continued from page 3)

Remember that what looks good on your computer screen may not look good on your television set. So always create computer graphics with the NTSC screen in mind.

If you plan to superimpose graphics over a video either by putting letters on glass and shooting the the shot or by adding the graphics to pre-shot video, remember to frame your shot with the lettering in mind. Keep the part of the screen where the graphics will be placed un-cluttered.

MATT JENKINS

VACATION VIDEOS—

Plan Ahead

I still call travel trips "vacation trips" even though I have been retired from my professional life for nineteen years. When I travel away from home, whether abroad or in the states, I always take pictures to help us remember when we get old. it used to be 35 millimeter slides or prints but since 1986 it has been mostly video. I have found that there are a lot of things related to camcorders to remember and prepare for before going on a "vacation trip." Most of you manage to prepare for your video trips but maybe some of these reminders will help you on your next video outing.

1—Batteries—take plenty and be sure that they are all good. I put a piece of tape on each with a number and record of recharging. I drain and deep charge every 5 times and note the date of the last charge. So called no-memory batteries call for a different routine but so far mine are all nickel cadmium batteries that do not like to be recharged until they are drained. I usually take 3 batteries and start with at least two fully charged.

2—The AC charger for the camcorder should be in your kit with whatever adapter and or cord you need to power your camcorder from the AC charger. A plug and receptacle is needed if you will be away from North America. A universal adapter can be configured to adapt to all countries' receptacles or you can use individual adapters to suit the countries you will visit. Recent model AC chargers work automatically on 110 or 220 volt and 50 or 60 cycle power. (check the manual or name plate.)

If you travel by car, a cigarette lighter power inverter may be worthwhile to power you camcorder or charge batteries. Special batteries for microphones or lights should have spares. you might need them and they may be hard to find. **Remember— no power is bad news.**

3- Take one or two more tapes than you think you will need. HI-8 and S-VHS-C tapes can be hard to find on a trip. I use only 30 minute tapes, dating and labeling them for each location, which makes it much easier to sort or to find a particular scene during editing. Nine thirty minute tapes is the most I have taken on a 30 day trip. Learn to tape each scene long enough to make easy editing but be very selective.

If you buy tape in Europe , Australia, New Zealand and most of South America, it will be in the PAL format, not the NTSC format we use, but it will work. The tape is just a bit longer. France and the Middle East use the SECAM system and I <u>think</u> it will work but I have not tried it. Japan, North and Central America, the Caribbean and Venezuela use the NTSC format. Also remember if you are not in a NTSC country, the TV and VCR will not play from your tape or camcorder.

4—A tripod is highly desirable but I usually do not have the space or energy to carry it. Sometimes I carry a monopod. A stabilized

camcorder is a big help without a tripod. Clamp on camera holders can be useful and make -do steady rests such as a piece of cord fastened between the camera base and your foot will help. If you must shoot freehand while zoomed in , a deliberate motion around the center of focus will seem to show fewer jitters than trying to hold steady.

5- Several sizes and types of clear plastic bags should be in your kit to protect the camera from rain and splash from a boat.

6-Pack a selection of any filters, supplemental lenses and lens hoods you use and keep a neutral density filter on your lens for protection.

7-If your camcorder has a remote control, be sure it is attached to the camera or in the kit. You may want to get in the scene while your camera sits on a table or whatever.

8- Miscellaneous handy items to carry are: a pen light, lens cleaning tissues, a foot or so of gaffers tape rolled around a marker pen. A/V cables should be included if you intend to play your tape on he hotel's VCR or TV (many require tools to hook up.) A small knife, screw driver and pliers can be handy at times. A small note pad and pencil, and a selection of strong rubber bands may be useful.

JIM BEACH

Editor's note;

Other suggested things to carry are: an empty 35 millimeter film canister to store screws or pieces that have broken off the camera and a small pair of earphones.

The
AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

69TH Consecutive Competition
1998 FESTIVAL WINNERS
CLASS A (Amateur)

FIRST PLACE $100 cash *"NATURE'S RICHEST REALM"*
By Peter A Norris, North Rocks, Australia
SECOND PLACE $75 cash *"THE SHOOT"*
by Terry Mendoza, Rochford, Essex, England
THIRD PLACE $25 *"MY OLD TOWN"*
By John J. Carey, Ontario, Canada

THE EIGHT BEST (in alphabetical order)
"AMONGST STRANGERS" by Christopher Byrnes, New Providence, RI
"CARNEVALE" by Terry Mendoza, Rochford, Essex, England
DRUNK IN PUBLIC..., by David J. Sperling, Mission Viejo, CA
"IT'S ONLY WEDNESDAY" by Howard H. Farley, Victoria, B.C.
"MATT & SHARON" by Sean Coughlin, Goleta, CA
"MY OLD TOWN" by James D. Town, Ontario, Canada
"NATURE'S RICHEST REALM" by Peter A. Norris, Australia
"THE SHOOT" by Terry Mendoza, Rochford, Essex, England

THE SPECIAL AWARDS

The Stuart Dabbs Memorial Award sponsored by Rose Dabbs for the Most Creative Picture
"AMONGST STRANGERS" by Christopher Byrnes
The Best Story Award sponsored by Irene Lewis-Haag
"MATT AND SHARON "by Sean Coughlin
The Best Editing Award sponsored by Erma and Jack Ruddell
"CARNEVALE" by Terry Mendoza
Best Cinematography *"ARLEKKINU" by Chris & Maurice Micallef*
Best Nature Entry *"NATURE'S RICHEST REALM" by P.A.N.Films (Peter A.Norris)*
Best Foreign Entry *"NATURES RICHEST REALM by P.A.N. Films (Peter A.Norris*
Best Documentary *"DRUNK IN PUBLIC, THE MARK DAVID ALLEN STORY"*
by David J. Sperling
Best Club Production *"KILLING TIME" by the Ealing Video and Film Makers*

CLASS B (Independant)

FIRST PLACE
"SUCCESS STORY" by John J. Carey, Burlington, Ontario, Canada
HONORABLE MENTION
"DEGREES OF SHAME" by Barbara Wolf, Cincinnati, OH
"MAGIC MUSIC FROM THE TELHARMONIUM" by Reynold Weidenaar, New York, NY

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL FILM/VIDEO FESTIVAL
LIST OF ENTRIES

Name	State	Entry	Award
Adams, Zac	NY	"Bloodbath"	HM
Agnew, Joni	CA	"Le Toast"	
Buckley, Joe	NY	"Blue Skies and Burning Flags"	Top 8
Byrnes, Christopher	NJ	"Amongst Strangers"	Most Creative
Carey, John J. Ontario, Canada		"Eleventh Hour"	
Caraaaaalson, Gregory	ND	"Girl on the Moon"	
Cavalline, Ryan	PA	"Firefighters"	
Central Cine & Video Club IL		"An English Lesson"	
Coghlan, John J.	NY	"Drag"	Top 8
Coughlin, Sean	CA	"Matt & Sharon"	Best Story
			Best Club Entry
Ealing Video/Film Makers England		"Killing Time"	
Farley, Howard B.C. Canada		"It's Only Wednesday"	Top 8
Haire, Jennifer A.	IN	"The Making of Carmel High Schools Musical, "Crazy for You""	
Horowitz, Ephraim	NY	"Socrates Sculpture Park" "The Panorama of NYC"	
King, Susan	AK	"Cold Turkey"	
Kirwan, Denis	CA	"Hungary Divers"	
Lantow, Brenda	CA	"Spirit of the Miwok" "The Shooters" HM	
Lehnert, Henry Poland		"The Rivals" "The House Painter" "The Flood"	
Lindenmeyer, Henry	CA	"Rodeo Cowboys"	Best Cinematography (Tie)
Lockwood, Howard	CA	"The Amazing Eiffel Tower"	HM
Mendoza, Terry England		"Carnevale" Top 8	Best Editing
		"The Shoot"	2nd Place
Micallef, Chris & Maurice Malta		"Arlekkinu" Best Cinematography (Tie)	1st Place
P.A.N. Films Australia		"Nature's Richest Realm"	Best Nature
			Best Foreign Entry
Paterson, Pat England		"The Romans Came to Bearsden"	
Paulson, Stephanie Jo	NE	"Haiti"	
Peck, Bob	CA	"A Medley of Birds"	
Prescott, Lee England		"Wheelies"	
Scott, Mathew	IN	"Adrenaline"	Best Experimental

Name	State	Entry	Award
Siebert, Oskar Germany		"Guernsey Lily Festival" "Danke/Thank You"	
Smith, Alexander	TX	"Soir Noir"	
Sperling, David J.	CA	"Drunk in Public, The Mark David Allen Story"	Top 8
			Best Documentary
Strnad, Ing Pavel Czech Rep.		"Dreams City"	
The Video Network England		"Talking Heads-The Young Man's Tale"	3rd Place
Town, James D. Ontario, Canada		"My Old Town"	HM
		"The Royal Ship, Segwun"	
		"Feversham Gorge"	
		"Indian Summer"	
		"Summer Storm"	
		"The Paper Cycle Trilogy"	
Turk, Gerald	MO	"The Cherokee and the Trail of Tears" "Winter in Yellowstone"	
Wood, Bernard	CA	"...and There Was Light"	

INDEPENDANT

Name	State	Entry	Award
Bussco Associates, Inc	NY	"Knitwits"	!st Place
Carey, John J. Ontario, Canada		"Success Story"	
Cobbett, Danie.	CA	"Mock Rock"	
Robertson, Anne Charlotte MA		"Emily Died (Reel Eight of a Five Year Diary)	
*Town, James D.			
Weidenaar, Reynold	NY	"Magic Music From the Telharmonium" HM	
Wolf, Barbara	OH	"Degrees of Shame"	HM